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THE WORD FROM WASHINGTON

'Honorable men'

Jeffrey Stein

It happened to be watching the Republican National Convention in Detroit with a small group of Latin American exiles. When George Bush appeared on the podium with Ronald Reagan, one woman blurted out, "This is just like Brazil! The head of the secret police is going to end up running the country."

Former CIA Director George Bush's position on the ticket may, indeed, foreshadow a quicker reach for the icepick of "destabilization" as a Republican foreign policy tool, but the difference from the Carter Administration will be only incremental.

First of all, in June, long before George Bush joined the ticket, advisers to Reagan began fanning out

across Latin America with reassuring messages for nervous generals in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Guatemala. In Argentina, former Defense Intelligence Agency chief and Reagan adviser Daniel O. Graham talked with business, political, and military leaders and assured them a Reagan Administration would abandon Jimmy Carter's policy of "throwing old friends to the wolves."

Secondly, over the past year the vaunted Carter human rights policy has exploded like a rotten corpse. From the beginning, the policy was merely a cynical maneuver by Zbigniew Brzezinski "to take the high road against the Soviets" after the debacle in Vietnam, to recapture the appearance of moral purpose in our conduct of foreign policy. Like any effective policy, it had to be applied from time to time to

have credibility, and when the early crude whiplashings issued from the State Department in a torrent of press releases, the generals howled. Today, the human rights policy is dead. The generals are purring.

A paradox in American politics produced Richard Nixon's opening to Peking. Only the red-baiting member of Congress from California could have got away with that, the legend goes. But the mirror reflection of the paradox is equally clear: The Democrats can tighten the screws of the national security state more easily than the Republicans can. While Jimmy Carter can kiss the generals, Ronald Reagan cannot. *The New York Times* would howl.

There are some, at least, who are challenging the edifice of the national security state. Among those who are doing it at the greatest risk are the people who run *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. They have an office in the National Press Building in Washington, four blocks from the White House, and what they do is "name names." Right there under Jimmy Carter's nose, they put out lists of CIA agents. This has upset those who believe such disclosures endanger the patriotic, hard-working, dedicated Americans who are doing a tough but necessary job in the world's back alleys. As former CIA Director William E. Colby is fond of saying, "We are honorable men, too."

You may have met a CIA agent yourself. He or she probably had a nice wife or husband and a brilliant academic career, kept the lawn trim, and cooked terrific barbecue in the back yard. He probably looked like George Bush. Striped tie. Blue blazer.

But one should not be fooled by such trappings. Don't forget the CIA's job is to murder people. "What the hell do you think we are? Boy Scouts?" Richard Helms, one of the very best CIA agents, once asked a visitor.

Louis Wolf is a nice fellow, too. He works at *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. A slender, rather shy kind of person, Wolf worked for International Voluntary Services, a church group in Southeast Asia, in the early 1960s. He



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went out into the Laotian farmland and rice paddies to help people grow food better, or to teach them how to read. The CIA was busy organizing the same people into a "Secret Army." But the Laotians, like the Bali islanders, are among the most peaceful people in the world. Most of the Meo tribespeople organized by the CIA are dead now. Louis Wolf became understandably angry.

Last month, *The New York Times* accused Louis Wolf and his colleague in their endeavor, former CIA agent Phillip Agee, of murder. *Covert Action Information Bulletin* had published the names of CIA agents in Jamaica, and a bomb had been thrown at one of their houses. "Let us look at laws that might get at them," *The Times* editorialized. *The Times* hastened to add that Wolf and Agee should be distinguished from real journalists who might also publish CIA names.

Meanwhile, it should be noted, and not parenthetically, that the socialist government of Michael Manley in Jamaica is rapidly going down the tubes. Manley, like his predecessor in Chile, Salvador Allende, was put into power by a free and open election. He is committed to democracy. But anti-democratic forces in the United States and the world banking community have cut off Manley's credit and, as in Chile in 1973, are creating a situation of severe shortages and strikes that may bring him down. The Prime Minister has called for elections in October, but if he wins he still may be doomed. The United States will send in the Honorable Men Brigade.

Two weeks after the *Times* editorial, the House Intelligence Committee reported out a bill which, if passed, is likely to result in the jailing of Louis Wolf and his colleagues for "a period of not more than ten years." The bill is careful to make only oblique references to penalties for the press, and those subsections will probably not survive the legislative process. But the purpose, clearly, is to make things safer for our own official "honorable men" and their business of murder.

A couple of Committee members joked at the hearings on the bill, "We all know who we're talking about. . . . We're not going after journalists."

George Bush would understand. ■